THE REDEMPTION OF TIME.

OR,

A SERMON CONTAINING VERY GOOD REMEDIES FOR THEM THAT have misspent their time: shewing *how they should redeeme it comfortably.*

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PSAL. 90. 12.

Lord teach us to number our dayes, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdome.

LONDON:
Printed for *Beniamin Fisher*, and are to bee sold at his shop in Aldersgate-street, at the signe of the Talbot. 1634.

THE REDEMPTION OF *TIME*.

EPHES. 5. 16.

Redeeme the Time, because the dayes are evill.

WHilest I bethought my selfe of a portion of holy Writ to treat upon, that might hold some agreement with the present season; this short sentence offered it selfe unto my minde. At the first I rejected it as impertinent, but after a second and more serious view, methought it was the most fit Scripture that I could make choyce of, on this occasion: for howbeit it hath pleased the common sort of men, to stile these festivall dayes with the name of good times; yet by reason of the grosse abusage to which the corruption of men hath made them subject, they may very well receive an alteration of their title, and in a quite contrary phrase, be termed evill dayes; yea, and that in the highest degree of all, the worst of dayes. Now in this time wherein time is so lavishly

viſibly miſ-ſpent, I hope it cannot ſeeme unconvenient, or untimely, to give a briefe exhortation concerning the right uſe of Time.

Theſe words which I have read, leade us into that path: being part of an exhortation begunne in the former verſe. There in generall, he had exhorted them to be moſt ſtrictly carefull of their waies, and to direct their courſe of life in ſuch reſpective ſort, as they might deſerve the name of wiſe, not unwiſe men: commending herein unto them and us, that very ſtrictneſſe and preciſeneſſe, wherewith the world hath now long ſince pickt a quarrell and falne out. And becauſe this was but a generall rule, he ſeconds it with ſome particulars, by which wee may bee led on to the like inſtances in other matters. The firſt of theſe ſpecials is placed in the well diſpoſing of Time, in this verſe: Where having ſet downe the duty of Chriſtians in this behalfe, hee backes it with a reaſon; which in it ſelfe and to a ſpirituall underſtanding, is moſt ſound and firme; but to the carnall judgement of a carnall man, is voyd of all ſoundneſſe and reaſon. The duty is, to buy out the Time, to traffique with it, as men doe with wares; and when it is in other mens hands (as I may ſay) to give ſomething (yea, any thing) that we may get it into our owne hands for good uſes. Hee meanes, that wee ſhould uſe our greateſt care and diligence (even that which we would imploy in matters moſt neerely concerning us) to win all the time we poſſibly can, for the duties of Religion and Godlineſſe. His argument to confirme this exhortation, is taken from the contrary,

trary,(if we looke on it with a carnall eye, it will seeme inconsequent, halting, and not able to beare up the Conclusion) it is, *because the dayes are evill:* that is, the customes and manners of the greatest part of men that live, are wicked and lewd. Now because the number and rout of the world is so strongly bent to all manner of ungodlinesse, as that they have even tainted the time it selfe, and corrupted the very dayes; the Apostle would therefore have the Ephesians, and all other Christians so much the more industrious, to take all seasons and occasions for the bettering of themselves. Because other men are naught, and starke naught, therefore ought faithfull Christians to bee good, and very good, and to turne all opportunities to this end and use, that they may bee furtherances to make them good.

The world would have framed a more crooked conclusion from this ground, and have said; Because men are so generally and extremely bad, (for that is noted in saying, *the dayes are evill,*) wee must therefore needs straine curtesie a little, and not be too strict, lest we should be overmuch different from other men, and incurre the by-name of Singularists. But the Apostle telleth us, that because the wayes of men are excessively disordered, and full of naughtinesse, we should bestow so much the more paines, that wee might not bee carried downe the violent streame and deluge of unsanctified living; and unto this intent should earnestly watch, and diligently take all good occasions of getting and doing good. You see in part the meaning

ning of this ſhort ſentence, which containeth a few words indeed, but is ſtuft full of worthy matter, which (according as my weakeneſſe can attaine) I ſhall ſtrive to ſpread before your eyes, unfolding it in ſuch manner, as that you may perceive the things, that lay therein cloſely wrapped up before.

Doctr. The point which the words offer to our conſideration at the firſt ſight, is this; That all Chriſtians ought to bee very good husbands for their time. Good houres and opportunities are merchandize of the higheſt rate and price: and whoſoever will have his ſoule thrive, muſt not ſuffer any of theſe bargaines of Time to paſſe him, but muſt buy up, and buy out all the minutes thereof. No man of trade can bee more carefull to chaffer and deale in the moſt gainefull things that pertaine to his occupation, than wee ſhould bee to deale in this ware of Time, wherein euery Chriſtian is, or ſhould be a well taught and practiſed dealer. As ſuch kind of men (if they can either make money themſelves, or borrow it of their friends, yea, or elſe (ſuch is the greedineſſe of men) take it up of the Uſurer) will not let ſlip any commodity wherein they have skill, and are perſwaded, that it will bring in large profit within a ſhort time of returne: ſo ſhould every good man uſe all diligence, (for diligence is in ſtead of money here, and care in ſtead of coyne) to gaine every day, every houre, and every minute (ſo much as may bee poſſible) from all unprofitable actions, and over-worldly affaires, to beſtow the ſame on the duties of Religi-

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on and Godlineſſe. This being ſuch a parcell of ware, as if it bee wiſely beſtowed, when it is heedfully gotten, will come in againe with both hands full of profit for recompence of ones paines taken in that behalfe. This ſelfe-ſame exhortation, this ſame Apoſtle deliuers in ſo many words unto the Coloſſians, when hee ſaith; *Walke wiſely towards them that are without, and redeeme the time.* See how *Paul*, an old beaten and experienced dealer in theſe matters for the ſoule, doth neither forget, nor neglect to teach his apprentiſes (as I may call them) the very ſecrets and myſteries of the trade of good living, whereof this is one, even the thrifty laying out and getting in of time: which being repeated to the Coloſſians (as well as delivered to theſe Epheſians,) comes with a double charge upon our mindes, to make us heedfull in theſe bargaines. And that excellent petition of *Moſes* (the man of God) doth meane nothing elſe but this, when in other words hee ſaith; *Teach mee ſo to number my dayes, that I may apply my heart to wiſdome.* For hee meanes, that God would inable him with grace, ſo ſeriouſly to conſider of the ſhortneſſe of this life, and the tranſitorineſſe of this preſent world; as that he might take all occaſions, and uſe all meanes to bend his heart to the ſeeking and obtaining of the true knowledge of God and himſelfe, and ſo the true feare of God, which is the beginning of wiſdome.

Coloſſ. 2. 5.

Pſalm. 90. 12.

And the want of this husbandry, Chriſt doth mournefully lament in the City of Ieruſalem, ſetting out unto us alſo the grievous and diſmall ef-

fects and consequents of this heedlesnesse, in regard of taking time, and using the fit opportunity. O (saith he) *if thou haddst even knowne, at the least in this thy day, those things that pertaine unto thy peace! But now are they hid from thine eyes, &c.* As if hee had said; Hitherto thou hast had the meanes to learne what made for thy good, and what might have prevented thy ruine; and if thou haddest but even at this last houre marked and considered them thou mightest have escaped these fearefull judgements: but now that thou hast beene all this while wanting to God, hee will hereafter be wanting to thee; thou shalt never have any true knowledge of these things, nor ever avoyd these miserable calamities. Because they did not use time, whilest time did serve, to repent and turne to God, therefore after, it was too late, God would not heare them nor helpe them. They that refuse the good offer of a good bargaine from God, shall not have this bargaine offered againe at their pleasure: yea, God will not deale with them at their leisure, that would not deale with him at his leisure. And Wisdome (in *Salomons* wise booke of Proverbs) speaks to this effect of ungodly men; That when their misery comes, she will laugh at them; because when she gave her good instructions to prevent this misery, they laughed at her.

Luke 9.42.

Prov. 21.24, 26, 27

The neglect of taking the fit time and occasion to follow Wisdom's wholesome counsell, and to come when shee calls, plungeth scornefull men into such a depth of misery, as that there is no meanes of recovery. For when wisdome laughes

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a man to ſcorne, whither ſhall hee repaire for ſuccour? And to this intent (of husbanding our time well) notable is the ſaying of the ſame Apoſtle in another place, bidding us, *whileſt we have time, doe good to all:* as much as if he had told us, that time muſt ſo much the rather bee beſtowed in doing good (and then it is redeemed,) becauſe wee have no ſuch great ſtore of it, as we doe fooliſhly imagine. The veſſell of time is not ſo full (as moſt men dreame,) nay it will ſoone come to the bottome: it is then wiſdome to ſpare betime, and not in the very dregs and lees. All theſe places doe in moſt plaine manner confirme the point, *viz.* that every Chriſtian muſt bee very ſaving and thrifty of his time; that is, muſt convert all occaſions to the good of his ſoule, and furthering of his reckoning; not ſuffering by his wil any houre or minute (more than needs muſt) to be layd out in any thing, but matters that may fit him for a better life. This is in truth to have ones converſation in heaven, when one upon the leaſt occaſion is ready to make one ſtep further thitherwards: when one gives all his time to God, but ſo much as may be more eſpecially to religious exerciſes, and ſuch things as doe after a peculiar ſort make for a better life; not letting ſlip any meanes of furtherance, that is offered him this way. Now for your better direction in this ſaving thrift, and for the more ful underſtanding of this point, and more eaſie practiſing of this needfull duty, I purpoſe to ſtand ſome while in ſhewing theſe two things: Firſt, from what Time is to be redeemed. Secondly, what the time is which muſt be redeemed. Galat. 6. 10

For the first, we must understand, that there bee five Hucksters of time, very Cormorants and Ingrossers of this precious ware, which betwixt them (for the most part) get up all the houres of mens lives, not suffering the soule to enjoy so much as an houre for its owne use, upon the best occasion to benefit it selfe. These theeves, when I have told you their names, I will describe more at large. They be; first, vaine sports; secondly, vaine speeches; thirdly, immoderate sleeping, or sluggishnesse; fourthly, vaine thoughts; lastly, immoderate following of worldly businesses and affaires. Play, Twatling, Sleeping, Foolish thinking, Excessive rooting in the earth. Now for these fond sports (amongst which I comprehend riotous feasting and belly-cheare, a companion of gaming for the most part, and also that trifling and womanish disease of curiousnesse in putting on apparell:) for these (I say) it is easie to prove, that they doe eate up these good houres, which otherwise would much inrich the soule of man. *Salomon* (the wisest of meere men that lived since *Adam*) hath set it downe as a sure rule (that never failes, scarce ever admits exception,) *That he which loves pastime* Prov. 21. 17 *shall be poore, and he that loves wine and oyle shall not be rich.* If this saying be understood onely of the body, it is most true: For these things will make a man extremely needy in the midst of large possessions, and plentuous revenewes. But if wee apply it to the soule (as I see not cause why it may not be applied to both) it is most universally true. He that is so wedded to his pleasures, and besotted

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upon vaine delights, as that the current of his life is carried that way, or else too great a part of the streame is turned thither; shal be destitute of understanding, shall have a naked, ragged, tattred soule: and that comes, because hee hath not used his time well; by the right imployment whereof he might have got wealth for his better part. I mean unto his mind & heart. A thred-bare heart needy of knowledge, comes from a voluptuous life stuffed with pleasures: and the Prophet *Isaiah* cryes out with a wofull and a bitter cry against those which had the timbrell, the pipe, and the harpe in their feast but would not regard the worke of the Lord: all their dayes were taken up in eating and drinking, in banquetting and feasting, in good cheare and merry-making; so that there was no time to meditate and thinke on those afflictions, whereby God did warne them to repentance and amendment; which is most contrary to this duty of redeeming the time, for all this time is even lost and cast away. And had wee no other proofe than our owne experience in this behalfe, would it not manifestly convince, that hee which desires to redeeme the time, must flye these vaine delights and sports? For doe wee not plainely see, what a canker it is in a number of mens lives? when (many dayes) they bestow three or foure houres together, yea, halfe the day, if not the whole, in dicing, carding, bowling, shovell-boord, or the like idle (if not wicked) exercises? doth not this waste and poure forth time over-lavishly? Or can that man have so much rest and quiet,

Isai. 5. 12

or ſo much fitneſſe and opportunity to doe good to his ſoule, as his wiſe care in cutting off theſe needleſſe recreations or vexations rather) would have afforded him? For theſe vaine pleaſures are not alone miſchievous hinderers of this thrift, in that they conſume the very houres themſelves; but as much, or more alſo in that they diſſettle the heart, and pull the affections out of joynt: ſo that a man is driven to take as much paynes to ſet his heart to a good exerciſe, as would well have diſpatched the duty, had hee not beene thus unfitted. Now what a miſerable loſſe is it when a man is robbed of his time, and of his heart both at once? and by both kept from reading, praying, meditating, examining his heart, or any ſuch good exerciſe for his ſoules advantage. Wherefore if any man would ſo prevent theſe vaine and fooliſh ſports, that they ſhould not ſpoyle him of his heart and houres: let him obſerve theſe two rules in his ſports, and then hee ſhall doe well in theſe reſpects:

Firſt, (this being preſuppoſed, that hee doe not uſe any recreations, but thoſe which hee can prove to be in themſelves lawfull:) firſt, I ſay, for the beginning of recreation; let every man know, that recreation muſt follow labour, for the moſt part: or if at any time it goe before it, it muſt bee very little, onely to fit one for labour. The Lord allowes a man no ſport (though never ſo lawfull in it ſelfe) untill ſuch time as his body or minde doe ſtand in need of it; chiefly when they have beene buſied in ſome ſuch honeſt affaires, as by wearying them, have

have made them unfit to further labour, ſo that they muſt againe be fitted thereto by recreation. Untill paines-taking have made the body or mind not ſo well able to take paines, there is no allowance ordinarily for recreation. All our ſports and recreations, if we will uſe them well (I ſpeake of thoſe which are lawfull) muſt bee to our body or minde; as the Mowers whetſtone or rifle is to his Sythe, to ſharpen it when it growes dull. Hee that when his Sythe is dulled, will not (upon a deſire to doe more worke) take time to whet it, ſhall cut leſſe, and with more paine, and more unhandſomely than he need to doe: ſo he, that when his body or minde is tyred or heavy, will not uſe ſome honeſt refreſhing, ſhall doe leſſe, and with leſſe dexterity than he might. But on the other ſide, if the Mower ſhould doe nothing from morning to noone, or from noone to night, but whet, whet, whet, rubbing his Sythe, he would both marre the Sythe, and be counted an idle worke-man alſo, for loſing his dayes worke; ſo he that will runne after the moſt honeſt delights, when neither the wearineſſe of his body, nor heavineſſe of minde requires the ſame (but only upon a fond luſt or longing after them) ſhall in time deſtroy his wit and ſtrength, and in the meane ſeaſon marvellous unthriftily miſ-ſpend his time. Therefore let not a man beginne the day with play, though never ſo lawfull, unleſſe his body or minde require ſome neceſſary exerciſe to make it more apt for his calling. He that ſets into the day ſportingly, ſhall be ſure to goe through it, either lumpiſhly or ſinfully,

ly, much more if hee ſpend all the day from morning to night in playing; let it bee never ſo much holy-day, or have hee what other excuſe he will. This rule is for the beginning of ſports.

The ſecond is for the meaſure and continuance of them, where this is a generall and a firme direction; that it is not lawfull for a man in an ordinary courſe, to ſpend more time in any paſtime, upon any day, than in religious exercciſes. I meane chiefly private religious exerciſes; I ſay, it is utterly unlawfull to beſtow a larger time any day upon the moſt lawfull delight, than in private religious exerciſes, or at leaſt in a cuſtomable courſe ſo to doe. This is plainly proved by that which Chriſt ſpeakes to us, ſaying; *Firſt ſeeke the kingdome of God, and the righteouſneſſe thereof.* You ſee here commanded to preferre the ſeeking of heaven, before any other thing whatſoever; to let that have the chiefe place in our ſoules, and in our lives. Now he that firſt ſeekes the kingdome of heaven, cannot beſtow more time in ſports of any ſort, than in thoſe things which doe directly make for the obtaining of eternall life, and that righteouſneſſe which will bring one thereunto; ſuch as are, hearing and reading the Word, praying, meditating, examining the heart, conferring, and the like. And ſurely this is a moſt equall thing, that the moſt needfull dutie ſhould have the moſt time beſtowed upon it. Yea, and it is a moſt eaſie rule to all ſorts of men, that have ſeaſoned their hearts with the true feare of God. For if a mans calling lye in bodily workes, then the very exerci-

Matth. 6. 33

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ſes of religion are a refreſhing to his body, in that hee doth for the ſpace while they continue, deſiſt from his bodily labour, (and his calling affoords ſufficient ſtirring of the body for health;) ſo that if hee be religiouſly minded, and have indeed ſet his delight on God, hee may well give as much time to theſe actions, as to any carnall ſports. But if any mans calling lye in ſtudy, or ſuch like labour of the minde; firſt, the change is a great refreſhing, and variety a delight; and then there bee religious exerciſes, which will refreſh the minde as well as any ſports; and for ſo much exerciſe as health requires, it is not long in uſing, becauſe nature is here, as in other matters, content with a little, howſoever men ſeeke excuſes by belying her: ſo that at the leaſt, an equall portion of time muſt be allotted to God and Religion: as to ſports and delights, even of ſtudents, if they will firſt ſeek the kingdome of God. Therefore let a man meaſure out the time of ſporting and recreating himſelfe, by the time he takes to pray, to read, to meditate, to ſing Pſalmes, to conferre of good things, or the like; and know that hee hath not liberty from God to employ ordinarily ſo much time, never to employ one minute more, in the moſt unoffenſive ſports, than in theſe ſervices of God. Now let a man conforme himſelfe to theſe two rules: Begin not to play, till need of body or mind crave it: Continue not ſports longer than a man hath, or ſhall continue ſome godly private exerciſe of Religion; and hee ſhall ſave his time well from this firſt Theefe.

Now comes to be considered the next spender, or rather robber of time, that is, idle twatling or babling; and concerning this, our Savior Christ deales plainely with us, saying, *That of every idle word which men shall speake, they shall give account at the day of judgement*: thinke well of this sentence, and lay up every word. Thou must not alone give account of thy workes, but also of thy words: thou must not alone be called to a reckoning for moving of thy hand, foot, or whole body, but of thy tongue also: and that not alone for wicked words, sinfull words, harmefull words, speeches in themselves infectious and rotten; but for idle and waste words; and not only for a number of idle words, for a whole throng or fleet of them, but for every idle word.

Now then if there be an account to bee giuen, and a reckoning to bee made for these rubbish speeches; judge, if it be not a want of redeeming the time, to lay it out in such a thing as will bring a sore and heavy burthen afterwards without repentance to cast it off; and judge if hee which makes much of time had not need take much heed of this ill-spent breath. Not alone then wicked speaking (when one belcheth forth lewd and filthy words) not slanderous and backbiting talke, (when one whispers of his neighbours faults behinde his backe, uttering (perhaps) also lying reports, and fathering that upon him which he never did, or meant;) but even vaine, needlesse, and unprofitable words, (which tend to no good or wholesome use for the soule or bodie) are a misspending of time, and contrary to this precept; and

and therefore alſo to be ſhunned of him that is this way thriftily diſpoſed.

No man can talke idely, but hee caſts himſelfe upon a double dammage, even the loſſe of a word, and the loſſe of time; two great loſſes, what-ever men imagine of them: And therefore the Apoſtle *Paul* alſo finds fault with a certaine ſort of women that were pratlers, which would goe from houſe to houſe, twatling and babling out frothy ſpeech, that was good for nothing; which fault hee condemnes as a matter ſomething worſe than idleneſſe, or doing nothing, when one talkes toyes or trifles, and ſpeakes ſhadowes or gawds that yeeld no profit. Such twatling cuts out the heart of good time, for it hath ſeldome any meaſure, it creepes by little and little over a great part of the day, and ſometimes of the night. How many winter nights doe men ſuffer themſelves to be robbed of, by this childiſh babling? And in the 4. verſe of this chap. the Apoſtle forbids fooliſh ſpeaking and jeſting: The one is a roving diſcourſe, gatkering together a great deale of chaffie geere, that will feede no man: a buſie, but abſurd proſecuting of a headleſſe and footleſſe tale (as we may call it in our phraſe.) The other is a fetting of ones ſelfe, and ſharpning of his wit, to coyne pretty and witty ſcoffes and conceits that may move laughter, and for this end onely: both theſe are condemned, as unlawfull, and unbeſeeming Chriſtians.

There muſt bee a difference made betwixt a ſmooth and pleaſant uttering of ones minde in ſeemely phraſes, and good and delightfull termes

and manner: and this whetting of the wit, to bandy and toſſe ſharpe and briniſh taunts and quirks.

Now this pleaſantneſſe of the moſt honeſt ſort is not to be uſed as a cuſtome, but in the nature of a refreſhing, when men are dulled for better matter. For laughter being a power of Gods creating, and wholeſome to the body, and therefore lawfull, it cannot be unlawfull in a ſeemely ſort, harmeleſly to move laughter by words; but it muſt not bee jeſting: one muſt not give himſelfe to it, and make it his occupation for an houre or two together. Now none can be ignorant, how great an hinderance this vaine ſpeech is to the well imploying of time. For doe we not ſee, that in many places, whole dayes are caſt away in the deepe gulfe of roving, and unprofitable runnagate-babling to no purpoſe? And that whole meales are devoured in gibing and jeſting, if without taking the ſacred name of God in vaine, and hurting ones brothers name, (which is very ſeldome) yet exceſſively, and not without thruſting out better matter, which is a grievous fault. Wherefore that we may be well armed againſt this robber, let us obſerve diligently theſe two rules:

Firſt, let us make conſcience of our words, and of the moving of our tongue, knowing it to bee a neceſſary duty that God hath impoſed upon us, to have our words alwayes gracious, and ſeaſoned with ſalt; alwayes good for the matter, and tempered with wiſdome for the manner. Which precept the Apoſtle addes preſently after this, of redeeming the time (to the Coloſſians) as a notable

Coloſſ 4.5

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part of it. The law of grace then must be the bridle of our tongue, and Wisedome must raigne in our mouthes, so that we speake nothing but that which may bee for some profit, to our owne or others soule or body, being fitly tempered to the present circumstances of time, place, &c. where and when we speake. For the words are gracious, not alone when they tend to the further edification of the soule in some matter of Religion; but also when they be busied about ones honest outward affaires, and lawfull calling, this being a great furtherance to godlinesse, that a man may know how (and accordingly practise it) to follow his calling with dexterity and wisdome.

Now he that would not have unnecessary trifeling words steale into his heart, and out of his mouth, and so spoyle him of good seasons, must set it downe, as a thing to which his conscience is bound, (as well as not to lye, sweare, or slander) not to speake one word, whereof he cannot give some reason from the good that hee doth ayme at in speaking of it. And every man must know, that having let slip such a word, hee hath committed such a sinne, as makes him lyable to Gods judgement, and the sentence of condemnation.

The want of resolving the heart thus, causeth many to take liberty to their tongues, (and harmefull liberty it is) and yet to thinke they have done no harme to themselves in so doing. And therefore the common excuse of such twatlers is this: I hope that it is no harme: yea, but what good was it? If it were not directed to some good, it hath

done harme, for it hath broken Gods Commandement, and set thy selfe deeper in debt than thou wast before, thou hast one trespasse more to answer for, before Gods Tribunall: no man shall ever avoyd this puddle, that will not be perswaded it is a damnable sinne to step into it. First then, labour to convince thine heart, and frame thy practise to this rule in all speaking.

Secondly, for honest comely mirth in speech, (besides that it must not relish of lust, nor savour of malice and prophanenesse, for then it is worse than idle words) it ought to be bounded with this rule; namely, that it bee used as a meanes to quicken our selves or others against some naturall heavinesse or deadnesse, by which the heart is made unapt for better conference, and other exercises of more profitable use; and when this effect is brought to passe, that laughter hath scattered the mist of dulnesse from off the heart and minde (or if no such occasion be offered) then let mirth and naturall laughter give place to his betters: otherwise comming into a continued custome, and shouldering out more needfull communication, it takes the name and nature of jesting, and is a thing much unbeseeming the stayednesse of a Christian. Thus the tongue may bee bound from dealing falsely with the heart, and cousening the soule of good houres and occasions.

Now followeth the third devourer of time, and that is immoderate sleeping or sluggishnesse. The wise King *Salomon* bare a great hatred to this Theefe, and gives many warnings and caveats, where-

whereby men might learne to take heed of it. The bed is a very cunning and slie cousener, that useth a pleasing tricke to deceive a man, and robs him, under shew of friendship. Now *Salomon* hath made a most fit description of a sluggard, caught by the wiles of sleepe and sloth; setting him out to the light, Pro. 6. 9, 10, 11. where hee brings him in roming himselfe, and rubbing his eyes with an unwilling hand, uttering broken and sleepy sentences, as one not halfe awake. First, hee calls him up (as it were) saying; *How long wilt thou sleepe, when wilt thou rise out of thy sleepe?* As if he had said; Ho, sir, it is time to get up; what, not out of your bed yet, at this time of the day? Then marke the drowsie, slumbring, and senseleſse answer: *A little sleepes, a little slumbers,* (for the Originall hath the words in the plurall number, well befitting a sluggard) *a little folding of the hands to sleepe.* See how speaking of sleepe all is in the littles; and though he names sleepes, yet it is but a little in his conceit. Hee tels not when hee will rise, but hee cannot rise yet; and when he hath had enough, and too much already, then he must have a little more, begging for sleepe as one would beg for bread. He askes a little, because hee would not be denyed. First, hee must have sleepes; and having slept, he must have slumbers; and having slumbred, hee must fold his hands, and rome and tumble himselfe. Behold a sleeper in his colours; and marke what answer *Salomon* gives, hee spends no more time to call him up, but tells him his doome as hee lyes in his bed; *Therefore thy poverty comes as a travaller, and thy neces-*

neceſsity as an armed man. As if he had ſaid; Well, be it ſo, if you will needs, ſleep on, take your belly-full of ſleepe, but know, that ſith you ſhew ſuch skill in begging ſleepe, you ſhall even become a beggar for it; ſith you will have your fill of ſleep, you ſhall have little enough of any wealth; poverty will purſue you, and overtake you; it will follow you, and ſurprize you, it will make haſte and ſtrike home, you cannot runne from it, nor reſiſt it, it comes with ſpeed and with force; it will take you in bed, where you cannot flye away from it, nor drive it from you: and what he ſaith of outward poverty, is moſt certaine of inward penury; a ſluggard hath ſo much the leſſe grace, by how much hee hath the more ſleepes and ſlumbers. So the ſame wiſe King hath ſet out a ſluggard in another place, ſaying; that *a ſluggard tumbles himſelfe on his bed, as the doore on the hinges*; that is, he is ſtill there, and there muſt be ſuch adoe before he can be removed from off his couch, as if one were to lift a doore off the hooks; a man muſt come with leavers to heave him off. Call him, waken him, bid him riſe, &c. all is little enough to reare him. This ſluggiſh humour (you ſee) is condemned long ago, for a miſ-ſpender of time. And ſurely it is not alone very dangerous, in regard of the quantity and muchneſſe of the time which it filcheth; but alſo in regard of the quality and goodneſſe; for it ordinarily feedes gluttonouſly on the very fat of time; it eats the very flower of the day, and conſumes the firſt fruits of our houres even the morning ſeaſon. After ſleepe hath made

Prov. 16. 14

ſtrong

ſtrong what labour hath weakened; after that nature hath beene well refreſhed, and the revived ſpirits come with a freſh ſupply of ſtrength and nimbleneſſe to ſerve the body and the mind: then for want of exerciſe all growes dull againe; as a band of Souldiers, that grow effeminate by lying in garriſon without labour all the Summer. Thus it robbes one of the principall and moſt ſeaſonable time, when the minde and body were both in the greateſt fitneſſe to reade, pray, meditate, or to diſpatch and caſt any matter of ones calling; it is a Theefe that robs one, not of his baggage ſtuffe, but even of his Gold and Jewels. (For ſome time is better than other, as much as ſome mettall is better than others; and this alwayes for the moſt part, takes away the moſt precious;) yea, it hath one tricke as much, and more dangerous than the former: If a man give himſelfe to ſluggiſhneſſe, it will often follow him to the Church, and cloſe up his eyes, and eares, both of body and mind, from hearing and marking thoſe moſt wholeſome exhortations, which like ſo many pearles, Gods meſſenger with a liberall hand, according to the pleaſure of his Lord, doth ſcatter amongſt men, that who ſo will, may take them up. The time of preaching and expounding the Word, with applying it, is the time of harveſt, it is Gods market day; nay, it is his dole or princely congie, when hee gives gifts freely, and thoſe of great worth too, unto thoſe that will take them. How can it chuſe but be a great hinderance to a mans eſtate to ſleepe in harveſt, and to be in bed at ſuch a time, when ſo

much wealth is bestowing? Therefore this sleepe, you see, is a most crafty and pernicious deceiver, and doth with much cunning over-reach a man, taking from him, for the most part, the morning time and the time of hearing, two the most profitable seasons, and the most worthy to be redeemed of all others. Now against the deceit of this false companion, a man may defend himselfe by following these two rules:

First, it is not lawfull for any man, upon pretence of leisure from businesse, to take more sleepe than is required for the strengthening and refreshing of his nature. The measure of ones sleepe, or lying in bed, must not bee according to ones businesse, but so much as his nature requires, for the better inabling of it to performe the duties of his calling, and of religion. Indeed a man may, and ought to breake his sleepe, and stint himselfe in this regard, when important businesse, either for the soule or body doe presse upon him; but no man must take more sleepe than is requisite for the sufficient refreshing of nature, upon vacation of necessary affaires. The reason of this is plaine: It is a sinne to straine and stretch naturall things for the serving of lust, beyond that end for which they were created and ordayned. Now sleepe, and lying in bed, was ordayned for the strengthening of nature, and for the repayring of the spirits diminished by labour; wherefore it must not bee drawne beyond this end, to the satisfying of a sluggish humour. So that, as it were a fault for a man to sit and cram himselfe with meat, till his stomack

ſtomack would turne backe the morſels, becauſe no buſineſſe did call him from the table: ſo it is a ſinne to give ones ſelfe to immoderate ſleeping or ſlugging in bed (as our word is, to ſleepe compaſſe) becauſe no urgent matter doth call him up. This is to be on the bed, as a doore on the hinges, that one cannot riſe till a leaver come; that is, ſome thing even almoſt of neceſſity. It is wicked to ſurfet on ſleepe, as well as on meat. So then it ſhall be a great helpe againſt ſluggiſhneſſe, to know that God allowes not any man to be ſluggiſh, and therefore to accuſtome ones ſelfe to timely riſing: for in this one thing cuſtom hath as much power almoſt as in any thing, ſo that looke what is ones uſe, that hee ſhall hardly refraine. He that doth cuſtomably forſake his bed, ſo ſoone as he feeles his nature freſh, and his ſpirits quickned, ſhall with eaſe keepe on in ſo doing. But hee that takes liberty to laze himſelfe, and dull his ſpirits for lacke of uſe, ſhall finde the more he ſleeps, the more he ſhall be drowſie, till he become a very ſlave to his bed, and make ſleepe his maſter. So a healthfull body by confeſſing it to be his duty (and through cuſtom, though hard at firſt) drawing unto it a nature, may have the morning at command. And this is the firſt rule.

Secondly, for time of hearing the Word, hee that would not be troubled with ſuch ſluggiſhneſſe then, muſt looke that he doe uſe meat, and drinke, and ſleepe moderately, in the firſt ſeaſon of it; and then ſtrive to quicken himſelfe againſt carnall heavineſſe and ſorrow, by prayer and meditation before-hand: which two things will keepe a health-

full body in ſuch good temper, that ſleepe ſhall not ordinarily oppreſſe it in this moſt ſacred exerciſe.

Now followes the fourth Theefe to be arraigned, and that is idle thoughts. Mans imaginations will be working, and toſſing conceits, up and downe almoſt continually. Now all men by nature are ſo tainted with the ſickneſſe of vanity, that their minds will runne willingly after nothing elſe, but that which vanity begets. And for this cauſe men have taken up a Proverbe, to dazle their eyes (if it might be) that this might not ſeeme a fault. They ſay, that *Thought is free*; as though one ſhould never anſwer for idle thoughts. And it is the common excuſe of men to ſay, They thinke no harme; as though it were enough, to hatch no miſchevous and harmefull Conceits, notwithſtanding they doe exceede in idle and unprofitable imaginations. Whereby it may be ſeene, that men are ſo farre from reforming this fault, and avoyding this theeſe, that they will not take it for a fault, nor eſteeme it as a theefe of time. But this ſwallowes up moſt of our ſolitary houres, when men are in bed, or alone in the night ſeaſon, and cannot ſleepe; or when they be journeying and walking without company, they cannot then poſſibly talke with others, when no man is preſent; yet their minde doth buſie it ſelfe, in idle talking with it ſelfe, caſting a thouſand fond things before ones eyes; as, what if this ſhould bee? or, what if that ſhould come to paſſe? and much adoe, to little purpoſe. This roving and friſking of the fantaſie (like a wanton Calfe, let looſe from the ſtall) is a frer-

a fretting worme, that eates out a great deale of moſt mens time, ſo that they cannot redeeme it for the profit of their hearts. This puts by good meditations, and ſuggeſts feathery and light ſtuffe, that hath no good ſubſtance in it; froth and ſome, which is not nouriſhment to the minde, but rather poyſon, in that it fills it full of wind; and a windy heart is no leſſe burdenſome, than a windy ſtomacke. This caſts out the cogitation of Gods benefits, that one may not be thankefull for them; it ſhoulders away the thought of ones owne ſinnes, that he may not renew his godly ſorrow and repentance for them; it juſtles out the conſideration of Gods Graces, that we cannot ſet our affections on fire, to long and labour after them. And in all theſe reſpects, it takes away the benefit of much good opportunity. For every time a man is alone, ſeparated from all company and outward buſineſſe, there is an excellent occaſion of furthering his owne ſoule, offered unto him. If any thing grieve him, he may freely disburden his heart into Gods boſome; if he faulted any way, hee may have full and free ſcope to confeſſe and bewaile it; if hee want any good thing, there is leiſure and place in as effectuall manner, and with as many words as one can, to beg it of the Lord. Thus great riches might come to the ſoule by a well-ſpent ſolitarineſſe: but vaine cogitations doe deprive a man of all this, and doe ſo blow up the minde with that which is nothing, as it growes ſwollen, like the fleſh of him which hath the dropſie, ſo that it may well be called the dropſie of the mind. Now, for

a helpe againſt this vanity of the minde, breaking forth in idle thoughts and fancies; Firſt, we muſt take the counſell of *Salomon*, *To keepe the heart with all diligence*. The heart is that which muſt be narrowly looked unto, that evill and unprofitable thoughts riſe not up in it. Here muſt be the ſpeciall care to prevent, firſt breeding and ingendring of ſinne in the moſt inward parts.

This Theefe will bee ſtill filching and ſtealing time continually, doe what one can. Wherefore a watchfull and wary eye muſt be had thereunto, and a diligent guard muſt be ſet before the heart, to keepe out ſuch imaginations from entring, as bee like rogues and vagrants, worth nothing, and alwayes come to ſteale ſomething. When a man makes conſcience of his thoughts, and obſerves them to what end they tend, this will be an excellent helpe to keepe them from wandring; whereas if one will follow the proverbe, and eſteeme them as free, they will never be kept from a buſie fondneſſe, like Ants in a Mole-hill, that runne up and downe, hither and thither, and doe nothing.

Then in the ſecond place, we muſt labour to be provided before-hand, of ſome profitable matter or ſubject, whereunto to bend the thoughts in ſolitarineſſe; ſomething that tends to the glory of God, and our owne good, either in matters of the ſoule, or the lawfull affaires of the body, muſt bee let into the ſoule, to take up the roome, that the buſie fancies may be the better ſtopt out. And indeed the Lord hath provided a Chriſtian of good ſtore of ſuch matter, if hee bee not wanting to himſelfe.

For

For there is nothing that offers it ſelfe to any of our ſenſes, which doth not alſo offer to our mind (if it were not ſtarke blind) ſome glorious attribute of God to be ſeene and conſidered of. So that to want occaſion of good thoughts in this variety of matter, is to want light at noone-tide, that proceeds from nothing but from want of eyes. But this is a great helpe to him, that can ſee to ſet his ſoule a worke firſt on the good things. For if one have let his heart looſe at firſt, he ſhall not (without much paynes and toyle) catch it againe, and have it within command. Thus doing, a great part of vaine cogitations ſhall be cut off.

Now comes to bee handled the fifth and worſt of all the five conſumers of time; which is ſo much the more dangerous, becauſe it is in ſome honeſt reckoning among moſt men; and is eſteemed as the right Lord and true owner of that time, which for the moſt part it holds by uſurpation and injury. This is the immoderate care of the world, and of things of this life, though in themſelves honeſt and lawfull, when a man doth wind himſelfe into ſuch a labyrinth and maze of affaires, as hee cannot get out at fit times to ſpirituall and religious duties, at leaſt not to thoſe which are private: when the heart is ſo ſurcharged with bargaines and purchaſes, and buying and ſelling, and building, and ſuch like; that God and goodneſſe, Chriſt and ſalvation, Heaven and Hell, come not into a mans mind once in a day, ſcarce once in a weeke; or at leaſt, if they come, they be quickly ſhut out, and have no long nor quiet entertainement there: when the

ſoule

ſoule is overwhelmed with caring, thinking, deviſing, and ſtriving how to grow great here, and is ſo toſſed in the gulfe of earthly matters, that it cannot come to land (as it were) to ſettle it ſelfe in any proportion, to thinke how it may grow great in heaven, and how it may get poſſeſſion of the true treaſure. This is a wondrous conſumer of good houres, digging them all into the dunghill of this world. Chriſt findes fault with this in the Parable: the men bidden to the feaſt, had Farmes, and Oxen, and Wives, & ſuch matters in hand (buſineſſe forſooth of more importance than ſo) and therefore could not come. And the thorny ground had ſo much carking and caring how to live, that it doth even choake the Word, the good ſeed could not grow thereby. And the Lord complaines of them of the captivity of Judah, that they could find time to build their owne houſes, yea, and to ſeele them too; but they ſayd, it was no time to build the houſe of God: ſo this ſinne doth ingroſſe all the time to it ſelfe, and will not give elbow-roome to any good exerciſe, eſpecially to any private exerciſes, without which, the publike are but as meat without digeſtion; and yet it comes like an honeſt and approveable thing, painted with the name of thriftineſſe and paynes in ones lawfull calling. To fence our ſelves againſt this ravenous and lurking fault, we muſt binde our ſelves to theſe three rules, which all depend upon the rule of Chriſt, that bids us *firſt ſeeke the kingdome of God*, firſt in time, and firſt in affection: And againe, *lay up your treaſure in Heaven*. Hence (I ſay) three rules may

Matth. 22.

Matth. 13.

Hagg. 1. 3, 4.

Matth. 6. 33

Verſe 20.

may be collected, to which he that would not be ſpoiled of good occaſions to the ſoule by worldlineſſe, muſt more and more frame himſelfe and his life.

The firſt is, that no man ſuffer himſelfe to enter upon ſo many buſineſſes, or any ſo eagerly, as that his ordinary affaires ſhould hinder himſelfe, or his family from the performance of ordinary religious exercifes.

The common and daily matters of this world, in any mans calling whatſoever, ſhould not draw him, or his family, from common and daily duties of Religion; ſuch are reading, praying, meditating, and religious obſerving of the Sabbath: for here a man muſt take care for his houſhold, as well as for himſelfe, that he doe not hinder them from taking convenient time to pray, and reade, &c. by forcing upon them an over-great burden of ordinary buſineſſes. For if the ſoule be to be preferred before the body, and heaven before earth; then thoſe cuſtomable matters that pertaine to the ſaving of the ſoule muſt bee ſet before, much more ſtand equall with the things that pertaine to the body. Secondly, the extraordinary workes of our calling (if any fall out) muſt not barre us from the extraordinary workes of Religion. As for example, harveſt and hay-time, or the like, are extraordinary times for the buſineſſe for the body: ſo preparation to the Sacrament, faſting (if need ſo require) and ſuch like, are extraordinary works for the ſoule; now as the care of inning ones corne or graſſe, muſt not keepe him from taking time to

prepare himselfe to the Sacrament, or to fast at his neede: so the receiving of the Lords Supper is matter of more than ordinary use for the soule; and some needfull journey stands in the like manner for the body, but a man must rather deferre his journey (if it may bee put off without over-much hinderance to him) than omit the receiving of the Lords Supper. The same rule must bee kept in all other particulars. For if the soule be more worth, and must be more carefully attended on than the body (as it is no reason the hand-maid should take place of the Mistresse,) then those things which do after a peculiar manner concerne the good and profit thereof, must not be neglected for such as do more specially helpe the state of the body outwardly. Lastly, if some outward duty of religion have beene put off from the time, wherein it should be performed, by some sudden and unexpected businesse, that required such haste (as in such case ordinary duties of religion may be deferred) then some ordinary businesse of lesse weight must (in recompence) give place to that exercise afterwards, and a man must find time for that, whether it be reading, praying, or meditating, by leaving undone (for that space) something that may be better spared. And thus you have heard what bee those speciall evils which lye in wait to couzen us of our good time, and how they may be prevented. And so the first part is handled; namely, from what Time is to be redeemed.

Now followes to shew, what it is that is to bee redeemed, and so you shall fully know wherein this

this duty consists. Now by Time, the Apostle meanes two things: First, the very passing away of houres and minutes, the space and leisure of any thing; and secondly, the good occasions or opportunities that fall out in this space. For the word in the Originall, signifies not alone the very sliding of minutes, but the space considered also with some speciall fitnesse, that it hath for some good, which we call the season of it. Now for the first, it shall not be needfull to say any more, being that every one knowes, that every thing must have some space wherein to be done. And he that will avoyd the five fore-named evils, shall never want time, or the space wherein to doe or get good. But for the occasions and fit opportunities that fall out, now for this, now for that, in this space, it is some more skill to find them out, and make use of them.

Now these seasons are all of two sorts: First, such whereby a man may more easily get some good to himselfe: Secondly, such, whereby a man may with more fitnesse and ease doe some good. Of the first sort, namely, seasonable opportunities to get good, I will name three particulars, which are most needful to be considered, and by proportion of which, any man may come to the knowledge of other like. The first, when God continues the Gospell, offering daily the Word and Sacrament, and calling to repentance and amendment of life; this is the season of repenting; this is the harvest wherein wee may reape Christ, if we be not negligent; this is the acceptable yeere of the Lord, in which one shall be received, if he returne. Whilest

wisdome lifts up her voyce; whileſt her meſſengers come daily to invite us; whileſt her gates ſtand open, and her dinner ſtands ready dreſt, whilſt her meſſage is done unto us; all this time if a man will ſtrive and endevour to turne from his ſinne, to leave his folly, and forſake his ſcorning, he ſhall be a welcome gueſt, ſhee will accept him, helpe him, and give him an encreaſe of grace, till hee become ſtrong with her meats.

Whoſoever liues under the preaching of the Goſpell, hath this priuiledge annexed to the outward teaching, that if he will but ſtrive and pray to God, to give him ſtrength to repent and amend his wayes and turne to him, God will (upon his promiſe) heare his prayers and aſſiſt him: but when the Goſpell is gone, then the date is paſt, a man may call, and not be heard; and cry, and not be regarded. So then every man redeemes this ſeaſon of the Goſpell, when he gives himſelfe to conſider ſeriouſly of thoſe faults which hee finds in himſelfe, and heares ſharply reproved in the Word, and hereupon reſolves to forſake them, and doth not onely his owne beſt endevour, but earneſtly calls upon God for his helpe, without which his power is but weakeneſſe and ineffectuall; when hee doth alſo duly ponder upon the holy Commandements that hee heares preached, and thoſe exhortations that are daily ſounded in his eares to move him to doe ſuch duties as God requires, and hereupon concludes with himſelfe to ſet about this worke, and craves the ſtrength of God to beare him through in the ſame. And when hee doth

doth advisedly thinke of the promises that are generally proclaimed, and labours to get some assurance that he is such a one to whom the right of these promises appertaine: thus doing, I say, one redeemes the time wisely, and makes his advantage of the Gospell while it continues, which is a thing that all men should doe: but so rare in the world, as that it is wonder the Lord hath so patiently continued his loving voyce, when men scoffe at it and will not heare. The Lord hath and doth send his Prophets amongst us, as hee did among the Jewes, rising up earely, and sending them, which with all earnestnesse do proclaime the dangerous event that shall follow upon prophaneneſſe, neglect and contempt of Gods word, breaking of his Sabbath, rayling, wrathfalnesse, whoredome, wantonnesse, covetousnesse, theeving, oppressing, slandering, lying, and such like: yet how many runne on in these evils presumptuously, rushing like the horse into the battaile, with an unreasonable boldnesse, not fearing any danger, and shutting their eares against these reproofes, as the deafe Adder doth, that they may not bee moved by them to amendment: ah, how contrary is this to redeeming the time? If any man have hitherto lost the season, let him now grow wise, and even at this time turne to God, and begge power to forsake these sinnes. How often and how earnestly are men exhorted to all good workes by the continuall voyce of God, speaking unto them by his servants? to reade the word of God daily; to pray privately; to meditate upon the Word,

to watch over their dayes; and to call themselves to a reckoning every day for the faults committed in the day; yet who regards this voyce? who markes these exhortations? where is one, that hath enjoyned himselfe to some constancy in praying, reading, and the fore-named duties? This is to sleepe in harvest, a most foolish practice and unwise: wherefore whilest there is yet a little time left, whilest wee have the light, let us walke in it, that we be not overtaken with darkenesse. Hee that hath not yet begun, let him be sorry that hee hath put it off so late, and now set foot into these wayes of God, whilest God sets out his Word as a candle to direct him, and as his hand to leade him by. The promises of God are in like sort published amongst us. Happinesse is held up as a reward of all true hearted Christians, and the crowne of life is proposed to those, which are found and faithfull members of Jesus Christ. And yet as though all were sure to get it, or it were not worth seeking by any, the most men flatter themselves in their sinnes, and will needs promise these good things to themselves, when they have no assurance or proofe out of Gods word, whereby to lay claime or title to them. This is a grievous and a dangerous neglecting of time. And if any have not yet made sure worke this way, let him even now set about it, whilest the Word as a touch-stone is before him, by which he may try himselfe, and which will make him such a one as he should be, if he will strive to follow it, and pray for abilitie to bee ruled by it. So then whilest God holds out his benefits,

fits, and ſtands with his armes open to accept us, let us take his benefits, and be perſwaded to come unto him in good earneſt; let it bee too late to travell when mid-night ſhall come, inſtead of noone day. This is the firſt and chiefeſt opportunitie of getting good: namely, to joyne with the Goſpell, and follow it with our endevours and prayers, by which it ſhall be made effectuall unto us.

The ſecond opportunitie of getting good, is in time of youth and health, whileſt the vigour and ſtrength of the bodie and minde is fit for labour, and capable of inſtruction. And *Salomon* in his booke of Penance, *viz.* Eccleſiaſtes, bids, *Remember thy Creator in the dayes of thy youth, before the evill dayes come.* Theſe dayes of youth and health are good dayes, when he which will uſe them, hath his memory ſtedfaſt to call to mind his evill waies that he may bewaile them, and to treaſure up good inſtructions and promiſes that may guide and comfort him; when the lims will joyne with the mind, and the mind hath the bodie as a fit inſtrument to ſeeke the kingdome of heaven, if a man will addreſſe himſelfe unto it: but the daies of old age and ſickneſſe faile much of the commodious fitneſſe for good; the memorie is cracked; the head and underſtanding is weake; and eſpecially the time of ſickeneſſe is ſo filled with paine, ſo ſhaken with diſtractions, and incumbred with griefes and ſorrowes, that one is nothing fit to repent, or pray, or heare, or to doe any ſuch thing.

Now when a man in the prime of his daies, and in the fulneſſe of his health, will give himſelfe to ſeeke

seeke heaven, will heare the Word, and meditate upon it, and apply it to himselfe, will confesse his sinnes, and force himselfe to bewaile them; will pray to God for good things, and set the whole course of his life in a right frame; he hath well taken opportunity, and he shall have rest in his latter dayes, much quiet and contentment, at least much strength and assistance in his sicknesse, because hee hath something in store against the time of want.

But alas, how doe the common sort of men bewray their monstrous folly in this behalfe? What more common, than that sottish and brutish speech, at least such ignorant and profane thoughts; men will repent when they be old, and cry God mercy when they feele themselves sicke, and amend all when they be ready to go out of the world: and foolish man, thou knowest not whether thou shalt dye suddenly; whether thou shalt have thy wits, and senses; or whether thou shalt have power of heart to make the least colour of repentance in those extremities. How many have dyed suddenly? how many sottishly? and yet how doe men for all these warnings, deferre the best businesse, namely, the worke of repentance and turning to God (which will require the whole strength of the soule) to the worst and most crasie time of sicknesse or old age? As if a prisoner, at what time a man was offering him a pardon, and calling upon him to take it, some good space before the Assises, should say, Nay, let me alone, I will not looke after my pardon, till immediately before I am to come before the Iudge: this were a most fond

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part, especially, if it were so, that the theefe knew not whether the next day should bee the day of his arraignement or no: so the case stands betwixt the Lord and us; if any man therefore hath beene so little carefull of his owne eternall good, as to put off repentance and conversion till that dead time, or doth foster any such harmefull conceit in his heart, let him now cast it out, and now that he hath his health and strength, upon better deliberation take in hand this worke.

Be not so extremely mad, as to give more time to the Divell than to God, especially to give the principall time. He were a foolish traveller, that would willingly gallop all the day quite contrary to his way, & being told of it, would answer, When it drawes towards Sunne-set, I will turne into the right way. Why bee men thus blockish for their soules, that knowing themselves to be out of the way of life, will yet of purpose deferre to set their feet into the right path, till sicknesse or age, when the Sunne of their life is at the point of setting? Ah, let our Proverbe teach us more wit: *Make Hay while the Sunne shines.* Turne, turne, whilst thou hast health and strength, use all to get repentance and salvation. The last chiefe opportunitie of getting good, is, when a man hath company, and is in the society of some godly wise man, able to give sound counsell and direction, able to answer all doubts, objections, and scruples of ones mind; now there is a fit opportunitie to grow in wisdome, to be resolved of all doubts, and to seeke direction.

So then, a man ought not to suffer bashfulnesse,

or other fooliſh matters to put by that good communication, whereby he might inrich his ſoule. It is a ſpeciall favor of God, that any man can come where his ſervants are that have excellent gifts; and hee doth deprive himſelfe of much good, that will not ſeeke to benefit himſelfe by them. When the woman of Samaria perceived Chriſt to bee a Propher, ſhee propoſed her doubt unto him, albeit hee was a ſtranger. When *Iohn* Baptiſt might bee come to, the Publicans and ſinners came and aſked what they ſhould doe. Whileſt the Jayler had *Paul* in his keeping, hee came to aske that needfull queſtion; *What ſhall I doe to be ſaved?* So if there be any man, whoſe heart is perplexed with ſome doubt, or overburdened with ſome tentation, or overmaſtered by ſome ſinne, it is a part of good diſcretion for ſuch a one, to goe and ſeeke the advice of ſome able Chriſtian or wiſe man, before that either himſelfe be too far gone, or he want the opportunity of ſuch a counſellor or helper. Theſe be three ſpeciall occaſions of obtaining good to a mans owne ſoule from things without him: In all which to take the time is a moſt commendable point of wiſdome, but to be negligent is ſuch folly as *Salomon* reproves, when he ſaith, *that a foole hath a price in his hand to get wiſedome, but he wants a heart.* Oh that men would beware of this heartleſneſſe, and take heed of loſing their price, by which they might get wiſdome. Now I come to ſpeake of the occaſions of doing good: and theſe are either in others, or in themſelves. Firſt, in others, and that for their ſoule and body. Sometimes a man ſhall finde

finde a kind of tractableneſſe in thoſe with whom hee hath to deale, that their eares ſtand open, and they are ready to drinke in an exhortation or reproofe, by reaſon of ſome affliction that is upon them, or ſome need they have of our helpe, or ſuch like occaſion. Here is time for a kinde and ſound admonition, then a man ought in all love, and yet with all plainneſſe to follow the occaſion, *ſtriking* (as our proverbe is) *while ſt the iron is hot*, ſpeaking when hee ſees him in the melting vaine, ready to take all well, and in good part. And ſo *Elihu* notes, that when a man is brought to his death-bed, and to abhorre all worldly delights, then his eares are bored, and then there is worke for an interpreter: before the bones clattered, and the mourners looked for the funerall, an interpreter was deſpiſed, but now his words are obſerved: thus a man may doe much good to his neighbours or ſervants ſoule, if hee wait for a time when he is fit to receive admonition, and then giues him it; as the husbandman in dry weather waits for a ſhower of raine, and then ſets in his plow. Againe, for the body, ſometimes one ſhall meet with one that hath true need, that is in diſtreſſe for his bodily eſtate, and doth indeed want releeſe; this is an occaſion and fit time to ſhew liberality; now a man muſt open his purſe, and be ready to give freely; I meane not, that every time a man meets a begger hee ſhould be giving, (for to thoſe a man ſhould not give, but in the very extremity of neceſſitie,) but if our brother hath beene afflicted by any loſſe through fire, or ſuch like, (that hee doe not make

himſelfe needy by idleneſſe, but it comes upon him by ſome hand of God;) here is an obiect fit for mercie, and here one may be ſeaſonably liberall; here is an altar, offer the ſacrifice of almes upon it, which is a thing wherewith God is well pleaſed. Some other time, ſparing may bee more fit, but now is a ſeaſon to be more free of gift, and open-handed.

There is an occaſion of doing good offered in others, wherein I have named theſe two particulars, that euery man might accordingly take notice of other like. Then, there is alſo occaſion of doing good offered in ones ſelfe, whether by ſome outward thing that befals him, or by ſome inward ſtirring of the minde and affections: as outwardly when a time comes in, wherein we have receiued ſome more ſpeciall benefit; this ſhould prouoke us to more thankfulneſſe by remembrance of the benefit.

Thus this time of Chriſts Nativity ſhould (if any way) be celebrated, that it might turne to an occaſion of more hearty thankſgiving, and more true obedience unto Chriſt, that gave himſelfe for our ſinnes, and tooke our nature upon him, that in it he might beare our iniquities. So when we be in the enjoying of Gods creatures, whileſt we be eating and drinking, or ſuch like, here is a ſpeciall ſeaſon to lift up the heart to God, and to kindle a flame of prayſe by this fewell, that our thankes might be ſo much the more earneſt, by how much wee have a more preſent feeling of Gods mercy, and doe even taſte how good he is.

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On the other ſide, a man is ſometimes preſſed with a ſore croſſe and affliction that pincheth his ſoule, here is a very fit occaſion of humbling ones ſelfe, and examining ones heart: for in theſe afflictions God calls to humiliation for the moſt part, which duty being performed, after, a man may rejoyce in his affliction; but whileſt the burthen of the croſſe is heauy, here is a notable meanes to further one in the worke of humiliation; and if one can take the time when God ſmites, hee may (at leaſt he ought) cauſe his heart to ſtoop before him with more eaſe, than when hee was at more eaſe for his body. Againe, ſometimes a man hath a more inward ſtirring of his affections, which he cannot have at another time; this muſt be followed, greedily taken, ſometimes at the Sermon, or upon ſome other occaſion, a man hearing or thinking of his ſinne, and the puniſhment due thereunto, hauing a kind of pricking in his heart, and ſome touch of remorſe within him, his conſcience begins to tell him that all is not well, and he growes to ſome orderly concluſion; ſure I will now be ſorry for this fault, and amend it: now if one will follow this motion, and goe after God when he calls (for this is one of his inward callings) and not ſhoulder it ont with fond mirth, but nouriſh it by a plaine confeſſion of his ſinne to God, and an hearty begging of grace and ſtrength from him, to doe that which he now ſees he ſhould doe; this will come to godly ſorrow, and ſo to repentance: but elſe if hee choake it and quench it, it will vaniſh, and the heart will be more hard fro-

zen in the dregs of ſinne. So that if there bee any, whoſe heart at this time at the ſpeaking of theſe words, whoſe ſoule ſmites him for his ſwearing, lying, Sabbath-breaking, whoredome, drunkenneſſe, gaming, covetouſneſſe, railing, or the like ſin; let him when hee is gone out of the Church, caſt himſelfe downe in the preſence of God, confeſſe this is his ſinne or ſinnes freely, without diſſembling; labour to be more ſorrowfull for them than ever he was, and pray to God to pull him out of this mire. This if hee doe, hee ſhall take the time, he ſhall be a convert, the Lord will receive him, as the unthrifty prodigall ſonne was recived, and by redeeming the time he ſhall finde redemption to his ſoule. But if he deſpiſe this admonition of God, his ſoule ſhall be more ſeared than before, his heart ſhall bee delivered to a greater hardneſſe and ſenſeleſneſſe than ever before, and ſo be further off from repentance and life.

But alas, the franticke dealing of men in this caſe is too palpable, and to be wondred at, when Gods word ſtrikes upon them, when they feele the keeneneſſe of it, when the threatnings have cut, ſo that they ſmart for it; then they runne to dicing, carding, drinking, dancing, &c. as it were of ſet purpoſe to drive away the ſpirit of God, that was comming towards them to heale their ſoule. None is ſo mad to take ſuch courſes for his body, that when hee feeles the ſore to ſmart, then to runne from the Phyſician, and cover it over with a clout, or ſtrive to forget it: yet for their ſoules a number deale ſo ſenſelеſſly in this thing as much

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as in any other, verifying that name which the holy Ghoſt hath given unto them, when he termes them mad men: for it is a property peculiar to a mad man, that feeling paine, he will hate the Phyſitian, and runne away from him that would helpe. Oh, that thoſe of us which have hitherto beene ſo mad, would returne now to their mindes, and to God to be healed! Againe, ſometimes a mans heart is ſtirred up with an inward and ſecret rejoycing or gladneſſe. Then ſaith Saint *Iames*, *If any man be merry, let him ſing Pſalmes*; now hee ſhall doe it with a cheerefull courage indeed; and therefore *David* would in ſuch a caſe riſe at midnight to ſing a Pſalme, rather then he would loſe the ſeaſon, when it would reliſh with him ſo well. Iames 5.13.

Sometimes alſo a man or a woman ſhall feele a ſecret penſiveneſſe growing over his heart, ſo that it even melts, as the ground that thawes after a froſt, and he could even weepe abundantly, teares offer themſelves in a full meaſure. Here is an excellent occaſion of renuing ones repentance. Now whatever be ones company, whatever be the matter in hand, except it be of abſolute neceſſity, let him leave it off, and betake him to his chamber or ſome ſecret place, let him fall on his knees; now let him open his mouth, and acknowledge his ſins againſt himſelfe, giving vent to his griefe, and turning all to godly ſorrow, whatſoever the occaſion was at firſt. Thus if any body doe, his repentance ſhall receive a notable encreaſe: but if hee paſſe it over, his heart will not anſwer his deſire another time. Furthermore, ſometimes a mans heart is earneſtly

neſtly moved with ſome hungry deſire to enjoy ſome grace of God, and great longing after ſome Chriſtian vertue: now let him in the heat and flame of his deſire addreſſe himſelfe to prayer; then one ſhall ſend up ſuch piercing cryes, and give ſuch a loud knock againſt the gates of Chriſts mercy, that he cannot chuſe but heare, and ſend one backe with an almes, as it were; thus he redeemes the time: but elſe his deſires will be ſo cold and chill at another time, that he ſhall ſcarce thruſt a petition out of his lips, and then theſe drop downe at his feet, and doe him little good. And thus in every other (through the turning of our affections) we muſt follow Gods ſpirit, yea, or nature when it leads us, wiſely turning all to ſpirituall uſes. And thus you may perceive what it is to redeeme the time, and how it may be attained. Now let us come to ſome briefe application of the point.

Uſe. Firſt, this point thus explained meets with a number of imperfections even in the beſt, and him that is moſt carefull of his wayes; of which we are now to take notice, and purpoſe amendment, if we have not hitherto conſidered of them. For this is a fault to which a man (even in a good meaſure ſpirituall) is ſubject for want of redeeming the time, that hee comes to that lazy paſſe now and then, as he hath nothing to doe, nothing whereabout to ſettle himſelfe. It is a carnall unſetledneſſe in a Chriſtian to be ſo negligent of his time, as that he ſhould have any minute of time, which hee knowes not how to beſtow upon ſome good and profitable uſe. The Lord offers ſuch a multitude of occaſions to doe and receive

ceive good, that if we could with wiſdom take thē, there is no houre paſſeth us, in which we might not do or get ſome good. And if there be nothing elſe, yet this is ſomething whereabout he hath good occaſion to be buſied, even to fal out with himſelf, becauſe he hath nothing (I meane he ſees nothing that he hath to do.) Sometimes if men ſee their ſervants ſtanding idle and unbuſied, they can ask them with a kind of indignation, What, can you find nothing to doe? And ſure the Lord might come with this queſtion divers times to us, and ſay, as it is in this parable; *Why ſtand you all the day idle?* asking whether the world were ſo empty of occaſions, and our ſelves ſo perfectly wel, as that we cen find nothing to doe? But there is no houre paſſeth us, which wee ſhould not find fit for ſome good thing, if wee could catch the opportunity before it be turned, and did not harme our ſelves for want of diligent redeeming the time.

Yet there are other faults, of which Chriſtians are to be warned: as to begin with the laſt firſt. How many be there that are ſo ſtuffed with worldly buſineſſes, and yet are greedy of more, as that they cannot finde leiſure one houre in a day, nay ſcarce in a weeke, to beſtow upon reading, praying, meditating or conferring? Yea, as though time were made for nothing but to ſeeke wealth and tranſitory things, ſo it is the chiefeſt of their care. It appeares that ſuch labor not for conſcience but for gaine, becauſe they cannot breake off ordinary labours ſo long, as well to performe ordinary duties of religion. Many may ſay (with griefe enough if they did well) that their hands are ſo full of the world, as that they can ſcarce

throngh the weeke, take the Bible iuto their hands to reade any thing therein, unleſſe perhaps it be in the Church at ſome publike meeting. Thus, men which are borne to a better inheritance, are content to weare out themſelves in the earth, as if they were to periſh in the earth with other baſer creatures. Here is one fault to be amended then: let no Chriſtian beſtow ſo much time in the world, as that he cannot find ſufficient to ſeeke heaven and the things thereof. Then for the matter of ſports, me thinkes ſome Chriſtiās ſhould even ſhrink, before the word of reproofe comes to them, when they may thinke of ſo many houres ſpent, ſuch a day at bowles; ſo many (it may be) the next day in ſhooting; ſo many the third day in ſhovel-boord, or the like exercſes: happily in themſelves not unlawful, and when they come to reckning for religious exerciſes, the count comes in very ſlowly, but the minutes or quarters, ſome halfe quarter of an houre or thereabouts beſtowed ſuch a day in praying alone, and ſome three or foure daies after, about a quarter of an houre in reading, and (it may be) the next weeke, ſome halfe quarter more in meditation: and thus if the expences of time were written in our debt-books, as they be in Gods, we might even bluſh to reade ſo many *Items* for pleaſure aud ſport, and ſcarce one or two in a ſide for private religious exerciſes. Then for our words: may we not hang down our heads with ſhame, to thinke that God made our tongues, and we ſpeak ſcarce one word in an hundred to his glory? Idle words, even many of thoſe whom we are to regard as Chriſtians, count them no faults, neither

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come to repent for them; it was but a word out of the way, say they. But this power to speak (being a gift peculiar to men above all beasts) ought to be more preciously regarded, than that it should be abused for base trifles. Then for idle thoughts; who makes question of them almost? Alas we do not remember that God hath searching eyes and fierce, which pierce into the depth of ones soule. Wee dreame that thoughts are not so much, and spare our selves in our unthriftines, whē we should deale more religiously with our selves. Lastly, some might be reproved for too long lying in bed, and spending more houres in slugging or sleeping, then health & strength doth require: many perhaps will think that it is left to their own pleasure, & that the Preacher is too busie, if he take upon him to teach thē when to rise, as though it were no fault to oversleep themselves. Indeed some old and sickly mens bodies must take it whē they may; but for the greatest part of men, if they knew what good the first halfe houre of the early morning spent in religious exercises would bring them, they would not love sleep so wel, as for it to neglect them. It is wel said, *He that seeks me early, shall find me*, and it well may be literally understood. Therefore (brethren) there is none but may see a fault in himself in these respects some or all of them, & happy is he that resolves to mend it. Therfore if you wil take good counsel, do thus whē you come home. Think, alas, if time must be reckoned for, and should be redeemed, how far am I behind hand with God, that (what for sleepe, what for play, what for idle babling, what for vaine

thoughts and exceſſive worldlineſſe) I cannot make a good account of the fortith, yea of the hundreth part of my time? And then grieve becauſe thou haſt bin ſuch an unthrift of time, & now begin carefully to ſpare before all be gone. But now here is a reproofe more ſharp for ſome others, that are not willing to heare of that eare. Tell them they muſt not ſpend a whole day, or a whole night in playing and ſporting. What not at Chriſtmas? (ſay they) why, you are too preciſe: well, but yet vouchſafe to conſider a little what God ſpeakes. Thou ſaiſt this is too much preciſenes, & ſo ſaith the world; but the Apoſtle bids to walk preciſely or warily, redeeming the time: and he that will take time to card or dice, and to uſe lawful recreations immoderately (I meane ſo as to be at his play the greater part of the day, & it may be ſome, if not the moſt of the night too) ſhall pay full dearely for it: either he muſt repent, and undoe this with much griefe & ſorrow of heart, or elſe he muſt ſmart for it hereafter worſe in hel. I would not deale over ſharply with thee: but take Gods loving admonition, and let him have one tenth part of the foure and twenty houres: yea, more a good deale than ſo, now that thou haſt more leiſure than ordinary. And here is yet a kind of people that are to be rigorouſly handled, ſuch as are all gameſters, that ſpend no one houre waking, but upon pleaſure: the world calls them ſcatter-goods, and the Lord wil cal them ſcatter-houres, that do miſ-ſpend both goods & houres. Such (let them think of themſelves how they will) as do make gaming the greateſt part (if not all) of their occupation, muſt bee content to

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heare that they have no portion in heaven, as they can keepe no portion in earth. How can one have treasure in heaven, that never laydup any there? if God hate a gamester, so that hee will not give him good clothes to his backe, (now he hath threatned that hee shall be clothed with rags) he will much lesse affoord him a seat in heaven. And howsoever for a time they may ruffle it out, and be clad better than their more laborious neighbors, yet this trade will surely undoe them, for they have bronght this perill upon themselves, that either God must not be true, or they must not be rich, hee must forfeit his truth, or they their goods, besides their name and soule: wherfore let such as have hitherto given their daies to such an unsanctified & inordinate course, surcease from the practice of their lewdnes; & both in conscience for their soules sake, and in discretion for their goods sake, resolve to become better husbands of time, lest their gaming on earth, bring beggery to their latter dayes, and damnation to their soules for ever. Lastly, let all good Christians be admonished to make precious account of their time, and with much carefulnes to take the seasons & opportunities of God, according as they have heard it is their duty. Christians either indeed purpose to learne, or else make a shew of such a purpose when they come to Church. Ah, that we might all learne this thrift, and practise it as we have heard: begin to day, and hold on stil. Now is a time of remembring the most admirable worke of Christs incarnation, when he was made flesh of the Virgin to purge us from sin, and save us from wrath by the shedding of

his bloud, and ſufferings which he endured in his fleſh. Give not all (alas, why ſhould wee give any of it?) this time to play, chiefly to bezeling, ſurfetting or wantonneſſe, but take ſome ſpace to conſider of the greatneſſe of this benefit, and to be thankefull proportionably thereunto. I would I might hope to prevaile with any by this exhortation: but howſoever, it is needfull to be ſpoken, that none may have occaſion to pretend ignorance. You ſee or might ſee your duties in this behalfe; and in practiſing the ſame ſhall finde the benefit of it. But fooles will ſcorne admonition, and thoſe that have accuſtomed themſelves to luſt, will not be intreated to pull their necks from our their hard yoke, and to ſerve a better Maſter; nay, ſo fooliſh are a number, that they thinke to doe Chriſt great honor in ſpending the day whereon they imagine that hee was borne, and ſome few that follow it, in more than ordinary riot and ſinfull exceſſe; as though he were a God that loved iniquity, and were delighted with drinking, and ſwilling, & gaming, and ſwearing, and ſurfetting, and all diſorder: but thoſe that know Chriſt, know full well that hee is not pleaſed with ſuch prankes. Wherefore if we will ſpend a day to Chriſt, ſpend it more religiouſly and ſoberly than al other dayes, not more prophanely and luxuriouſly. We ſhould neither forget his birth; but when wee obſerve ſome ſpeciall time of remembring it, ſhew that wee remember his goodneſſe by doing good, more honour to his name, not by committing more rebellion againſt him. And to conclude, as at this time ſo at al times, let al men that would have their

soules well furnished with inward substance, play the good husbands in taking time and opportunity. Whensoever we find any fit occasion of getting or doing good in our selves or others, let it not slip, but lay hold upon it, and use it. It is joyfull to thinke (if we could think of it seriously) what commodity this thrift would bring; how much knowledge and godlinesse might he get, that would keep his tongue and heart carefully to good matters? What a large treasure of good works might he have, that would be ready whensoever his neighbours necessity called for help, to stretch out his hand for his releefe? and when he saw him fit for an admonition, would wisely bestow it upon him? how ful of grace should his old age & sicknes be, that would give his health to God, & his first yeers to the service of his soule? how great acquaintance might hee get in the palace of Wisedome, that would come to her at her first call, and enter so soone as the doores were set open? how many sins might a man leave, and how much power should he get over all sin, that (when his hart smites him) would turne to God by praier and confession? What great grace would affliction bring, if a man would settle himselfe to humiliation, and gage his heart in time of affliction? how much thankfulnesse might he have, that would lift up his heart to God in the fruition of every blessing? how many fervent prayers might hee store up in heaven that would not fore-slow time, when hee feeles his desires earnest? how comfortably might hee weepe over Christ, and how plentifully, that would take the tide of teares; and turne all pensiveneſſe to this use?

uſe? and how many ſweet and chearefull Pſalmes might a Chriſtian ſing, if hee would turne all his mirth into a Pſalme, and offer it up to God? Oh what a large encreaſe of grace would this care bring? how ſhould his ſoule thrive, that would be thus husbandly? Surely as the commonſpeech hath commended a little land well tilled, before much more ground that is careleſly dreſſed: ſo the weaker means with this care, would be more available to enrich the heart, than are the ſtrongeſt without it. It is not the greatneſſe of ones living that makes one rich, but the good employing & wary husbanding of it: ſo it is not the greatneſſe of the meanes, but the diligent redeeming of time, to make uſe of the meanes, that makes the ſoule wealthy. But if great meanes joyne with great care, the encreaſe will bee ſo much the more large, as a large living with good husbandry. But alas, hence comes it, that ſome in the ſtore of all good meanes of ſalvation, are very beggars and banckrupts, becauſe of their negligence to take the time and fit ſeaſon. They let paſſe all good opportunities, and care not for any occaſion for the ſoule, & how can their ſoule thrive? Wherefore let every true-hearted Chriſtian learne this wiſdome and practiſe it, as ever hee deſires to ſtore his ſoule with that wealth, which will make him glorious in the eyes of God, and much ſet by even in heaven among the Angels. And thus much for this time, and this duty of redeeming the time.

FINIS.